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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06

ACDA-07 SAJ-01 OMB-01 IO-13 /081 W

----- 003063

P R 251420Z SEP 76

FM USMISSION USBERLIN

TO AMEMBASSY PRIORITY

SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3158

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

USMISSION NATO

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY BERLIN

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 USBERLIN 2026

E O 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: PFOR, WB, US, UK, UR, FR, GW, GE

SUBJ: AMBASSADOR HILLENBRAND'S SEPTEMBER 24 LUNCHEON WITH
AMBASSADOR ABRASIMOV

1. SUMMARY: AT CORDIAL FAREWELL LUNCHEON SEPTEMBER 24 HOSTED BY AMBASSADOR HILLENBRAND, HE AND SOVIET AMBASSADOR ABRASIMOV REVIEWED IN GENERAL TERMS HOW QA HAS WORKED OUT SINCE IT CAME INTO FORCE 4 1/Q2 YEARS AGO. BOTH AMBASSADORS AGREED QA HAD BEEN IN THE MAIN SUCCESSFUL BUT EACH TOOK OPPORTUNITY TO EXPLAIN HIS RESPECTIVE GOVERNMENT'S POINT OF VIEW IN AREAS OF CONTINUED DISAGREEMENT, E.G. NATURE OF WEST BERLIN'S TIES TO FRG ON SOVIET SIDE AND AUGUST 13 VIOLATION OF TRANSIT AGREEMENT FOR U.S. ABRASIMOV STRESSED THAT NO RESPONSIBLE OFFICIAL IN USSR HAS EVER HELD VIEW THAT WESTERN ALLIES ARE "PLOTING" TO UNDERMINE QA. VIOLATIONS OCCUR BECAUSE OF ACTIONS OF FRG AND SENAT AND BECAUSE WESTERN ALLIES SOMETIMES TAKE OVERLY LIBERAL INTERPRETATION OF QA LEADING TO UNFORTUNATE VIOLATIONS OF ITS SPIRIT. ABRASIMOV SAID US AND USSR
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(LITERALLY AMBASSADOR RUSH AND HIMSELF ACTING UNDER NATIONAL INSTRUCTIONS) HAD FOR ALL PRACTICAL PURPOSES CREATED THE QA AND ITS WAS PRIMARILY UP TO SAME TWO NATIONS TO SEE TO IT THAT QA PROPERLY OBSERVED SO AS TO AVOID

FURTHER DIFFICULTIES IN BERLIN. HE ALSO EMPHASIZED THAT USSR DOES NOT WISH TO ADD ANYTHING TO QA; LATER ABRASIMOV BALANCED THIS FLAT STATEMENT BY SAYING THAT IF ONE SIDE FAILS TO LIVE UP TO AGREEMENT OTHER SIDE CAN CALL FOR CONSULTATIONS. END SUMMARY.

2. AMBASSADOR HILLENBRAND OPENED POST-PRANDIAL CONVERSATION WITH GENERAL REMARKS DRAWING ON HIS LONG EXPERIENCE WITH BERLIN AFFAIRS. HE SAID THAT HE WISHED TO AVOID AN EXCHANGE OVER DAY-TO-DAY DISAGREEMENTS. AMB NOTED THAT HE HAD READ WITH INTEREST ABRASIMOV'S NEUES DEUTSCHLAND ARTICLE ALONG WITH AMB FALIN'S GENERAL ANZEIGER INTERVIEW, AND OTHER RECENT SOVIET COMMENTARIES ON BERLIN. HE REFLECTED THAT HE HAD FOR MANY YEARS LISTENED TO THE OPPOSING VIEWS WHICH HAD BEEN PUT FORWARD ON BERLIN INCLUDING THOSE ARGUED BY MINISTER COUNSELOR GROMYKO'S FATHER IN GENEVA DURING THE 1959 CONFERENCE. IN HIS VIEW THE QA HAD TENDED TO REMOVE A MAJOR POINT OF FRICTION BETWEEN THE THREE WESTERN ALLIES AND THE USSR THAT FORMER CPCU FIRST SECRETARY KRUSCHEV HAD CALLED A QUOTE BONE IN THE THROAT UNQUOTE.

3. THE AMBASSADOR EMPHASIZED THAT USG PLACES GREAT VALUE ON QA, NOT ONLY FOR ITSELF, BUT ALSO FOR THE ESSENTIAL ROLE IT PLAYS WITHIN THE GENERAL FRAMEWORK OF A NUMBER OF AGREEMENTS WHICH, TAKEN TOGETHER, CREATE THE POSSIBILITY FOR DETENTE. BECAUSE WE FEEL THE WAY WE DO, THE US AND ITS BRITISH AND FRENCH ALLIES HAVE BEEN PREPARED TO TAKE NECESSARY ACTIONS TO MAINTAIN THE PROVISIONS OF THE QA, AS WE INTERPRET IT, TO THE POINT WHERE, AS EXEMPLIFIED BY THE ISSUANCE OF THE RECENT BK/O ON THE FRG TERRORISM LAW, WE ARE EVEN BEING ATTACKED BY THE WEST BERLIN AND FRG PRESS. AMBASSADOR HILLENBRAND STRESSED TO ABRASIMOV THAT THE ALLIES WILL CONTINUE TO DO THEIR DUTY AND TAKE SUCH ACTION AS IS NECESSARY TO ENSURE THE CORRECT APPLICATION OF THE QA.

4. THE AMBASSADOR CONTINUED THAT PRECISELY BECAUSE THE US VALUES QA SO HIGHLY WE WERE DISTRESSED WHEN WE SAW WHAT WE
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COULD ONLY REGARD AS A DIRECT VIOLATION OF THE QA, SUCH AS OCCURRED ON AUGUST 13. THE MISUSE PROVISION OF THE TRANSIST AGREEMENT NEVER COVERED WHAT PEOPLE PLANNED TO DO IN WEST BERLIN. IT WAS INTENDED TO COVER THE GDR'S LEGITIMATE RIGHT TO PREVENT SUCH THINGS AS THE INTRODUCTION OF DRUGS INTO ITS TERRITORY FROM HAPPENING. AMBASSADOR DID NOT DWELL ON DETAILS OF THIS ISSUE SINCE HE MERELY WISHED TO MAKE QUITE CLEAR WHAT THE WESTERN UNDERSTANDING OF THE QA AND SUBSIDIARY AGREEMENTS MEANT WITH RESPECT TO MISUSE, AND TO POINT OUT THAT IT IS NOT IN OUR MUTUAL INTEREST TO HAVE VIOLATIONS OF THIS SORT RECUR BECAUSE THEY COULD IN TIME LEAD TO A RETURN TO THE EARLIER BERLIN SITUATION WHICH NO ONE WANTED.

5. BEFORE CONCLUDING HIS OPENING REMARKS AMBASSADOR HILLENBRAND REPEATED WHAT HE HAD ONCE TOLD AMBASSADOR YEFREMOV: THERE IS NO "PLOT" AFOOT IN THE WEST TO SEEK WAYS TO UNDERMINE THE QA AS SOME PEOPLE ON THE SOVIET SIDE APPEAR TO SUSPECT. WE ARE SINCERE IN OUR DESIRE THAT THE QA BE SUCCESSFULLY IMPLEMENTED. IT WOULD BE HELPFUL IF THE SOVIET UNION WOULD NOT OPERATE ON THE ASSUMPTION THAT PEOPLE ON THE WESTERN SIDE SEEK TO UNDERMINE THE QA.

6. ABRASIMOV REPLIED THAT THE SOVIET GOVERNMENT BELIEVES THE ALLIES ARE GENUINELY TRYING TO FULFILL THEIR OBLIGATIONS UNDER THE QA. THE WORD "PLOT", HE STRESSED, HAS NEVER BEEN USED BY RESPONSIBLE PEOPLE IN HIS GOVERNMENT. SUCH SUSPICIOUS ARE CLEARLY BASELESS AND ABRASIMOV ADDED IN CURIOUS ASIDE THAT AMBASSADOR YEFREMOV IS SITTING IN AUSTRIA TODAY BECAUSE HE BELIEVED THERE WAS SUCH A PLOT. ABRASIMOV BLAMED SENAT AND FRG FOR VIOLATING QA, BUT FELT THAT THE ALLIES ARE SOMETIMES TOO LIBERAL IN THEIR INTERPRETATION OF THE QA AND TOO WILLING TO TOLERATE TRANSGRESSIONS. THIS LEADS, UNFORTUNATELY, TO VIOLATIONS OF THE SPIRIT IF NOT THE LETTER OF THE AGREEMENT BY ALLIES.

7. ABRASIMOV THEN CITED AS CONCRETE EXAMPLES OF VIOLATIONS THE FEDERAL EXVIRONMENTAL OFFICE (WHICH HE TOOK PAINS TO POINT OUT CAME TO BERLIN WHEN HE WAS NOT HERE), THE REPEATED APPEARANCE IN BERLIN OF HIGH RANKING FRG OFFICIALS
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ACTING IN THEIR OFFICIAL CAPACITIES, SUCH AS JUSTICE MINISTER VOGEL ADMINISTERING AN OATH OF OFFICE, AND THE HOLDING OF LANDTAG MEETINGS IN THE REICHSTAG BUILDING BY CARIOUS STATE PARLIAMENTS. THESE ACTS ARE PROVOCATIONS TO SHOW THE WEST BERLIN IS ORGANICALLY TIED TO THE FRG. THE FRG, HE SAID, DOES NOT HAVE THE RIGHT TO INCREASE ITS PRESENCE HERE.

8. REFERRING TO RECENT INCIDENTS ALONG THE FRG-GDR BORDER, ABRASIMOV SAID THE USSR AND GDR COULD OVERLOOK AN ISOLATED INCIDENT WHEN "A MAD MAN" ATTEMPTS TO PUSH OVER A DEMARCATION POST. BUT WHEN SOMEONE COMES WITH A HEAVY TRUCK OR TRACTOR WITH SPEICAL EQUIPMENT ATTEMPTS TO PULL DOWN WHOLE SECTIONS OF THE BORDER FENSES, THAT IS A SERIOUS PROVOCATION, AN ATTEMPT TO VIOLATE THE GDR'S SOVEREIGN BORDER. WHEN THE GDR ACTS AGAINST SUCH PROVOCATIONS IT DOES SO WITH THE FULL SUPPORT AND BLESSING OF THE SOVIET UNION. ABRASIMOV WONDERED IF US KNEW HOW OFTEN WEST GERMAN TRAVERLS CLAIMING TO BE ENROUTE TO DRESDEN AND LEIPZIG THEN TURNED UP IN ROSTOCK OR STRALSUND.

9. AS FAR AS STERNFAHRT INCIDENT WAS CONCERNED ABRASIMOV CONCEDED THAT THERE SHOULD BE NO PROBLEM IF TRANSIT TRAVELERS

ARE TAKING MATERIALS TO WEST BERLIN FOR USE THERE. HE CLAIMED, AS WAS TO BE EXPECTED HOWEVER, THAT BUSES TURNED BACK BY GDR HAD DROPPED PROVOCATIVE ANTI-GDR AND ANTI-SOVIET MATERIALS OUT OF THE WINDOWS AND DISPLAYED PLACARDS AND SLOGANS ON OUTSIDE OF BUSES. THE GDR WAS JUSTIFIED IN TURNING BACK THESE BUSES. ABRASIMOV WENT ON TO CHALLENGE WEST TO SHOW WHERE ANY "NORMAL" BUSES HAD BEEN TURNED BACK. WHEN IT CAME HIS TURN TO SPEAK AGAIN AMBASSADOR HILLENBRAND DID JUST THAT, SUGGESTING THAT AMBASSADOR ABRASIMOV AND HIS COLLEAGUES HAD NOT BEEN PROPERLY ADVISED OF THE TRUE FACTS OF THE STERNFAHRT INCIDENT BY GDR OFFICIALS.

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ACDA-07 SAJ-01 OMB-01 IO-13 /081 W

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P R 251420Z SEP 76

FM USMISSION USBERLIN

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10. ABRASIMOV THOUGHT PRINCIPAL TASK OF FOUR AMBASSADORS IS TO GUARANTEE THAT PRIVISONS OF QA ARE FULFILLED. IT IS NOT UP THE TO "FIFTH, SIXTH OR SEVENTH" PARTIES WHO DID NOT NEGOTIATE THE QA TO INTERPRET IT AS THEY SEE FIT. IF ALLIES AND SOVIETS PERMIT SUCH INTERPRETATION, THE FRG WILL EVENTUALLY CLAIM THAT THE QA IS NO LONGER VALID AND THAT BERLIN IS A LAND OF THE FRG. THEN LONG YEARS OF HARD WORK BY THE ALLIES AND SOVIET UNION (33 AMBASSADORIAL MEETINGS, FOR EXAMPLE) WILL GO DOWN THE DRAIN. ABRASIMOV RETURNED TO THIS THEME A SECOND TIME AT THE END OF THE DISCUSSION WHEN HE STRESSED THAT, THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE FRENCH AND UK ASIDE, IT WAS REALLY THE US AND SOVIET GOVERNMENTS WHO HAD HAMMERED OUT WHAT WAS AND IS ACCEPTABLE IN BERLIN, AND IT REMAINS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THESE TWO GOVERNMENTS TO ENSURE THAT THE QA WORKS. ABRASIMOV CONCLUDED THAT THE

SOVIET UNION HAS NOT WISHED AND DOES NOT NOW WISH TO ADD ANYTHING TO THE AGREEMENT.

11. AMBASSADOR HILLENBRAND IN REPLY REVIEWED WITH
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ABRASIMOV ALLIED POSITION ON MUCH DISPUTED "TIES CLAUSE" AND REMINDED HIM THAT WHILE QA SPECIFICALLY FORBADE CERTAIN ACTS BY FRG IN WEST BERLIN, MANY OTHER ACTS WERE PERMITTED. THE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN BERLIN AND THE FRG WHICH GREW OVER TIME WERE NOT ANNULLED BY THE QA. THE AMBASSADOR SUGGESTED TO ABRASIMOV THAT WERE HE TO CAREFULLY STUDY TYPES OF FRG ACTIVITIES WHICH ALLIES PERMITTED IN WEST BERLIN HE WOULD DISCOVER THAT ALLIES DO NOT PERMIT FRG TO PERFORM ACTS OF STATE AUTHORITY IN BERLIN. RECENT ACTIONS BY ALLIES IN ISSUING BK/O ON FRG TERRORISM LAW AS GOOD EXAMPLE. AMBASSADOR ALSO SUGGESTED SOVIETS SHOULD NOT TAKE SO SERIOUSLY VISITS TO BERLIN BY FRG OFFICIALS AS THIS ONLY NORMAL EXPRESSION OF TIES. LIKEWISE THEY SHOULD NOT BECOME UPSET BY OFF-HAND STATEMENTS ABOUT THE STATUS OF WEST BERLIN BY GERMAN POLITICIANS. THESE VISITS AND STATEMENTS HAD ALWAYS TAKEN PLACE AND DID NOT AFFECT THE STATUS OF THE CITY.

12. IN HIS CONCLUDING REMARKS ABRASIMOV DISAGREED WITH A POINT MADE EARLIER BY AMBASSADOR HILLEND BRAND THAT MANY OF OUR DIFFICULTIES STEM FROM THE FACT THAT THE SOVIETS CONTINUE TO INSIST ON A ONE-SIDED READING OF QA AND THAT THE SOVIETS PUT TOO MUCH STRESS ON THE PROVISION THAT WEST BERLIN IS NOT TO GOVERNED BY FRG WHILE IGNORING THE BALANCING "TIES" CLAUSE. ABRASIMOV SAID THAT THE SOVIETS RECOGNIZE AND ACCEPT THE NEED FOR ECONOMIC TIES BETWEEN FRG AND WEST BERLIN, WITHOUT WHICH CITY COULD NOT SURVIVE. BUT OFFICIAL VISIT BY RANKING FRG OFFICIALS, ESTABLISHMENT OF FEDERAL OFFICES, AND OFFICIAL ACTIVITIES BY FEDERAL OFFICIALS SUCH AS FEDERAL PRESIDENT SCHEEL CANNOT BE TOLERATED. UP UNTIL NOW, ABRASIMOV WARNED, SOVIETS HAD CALLED THESE VIOLATIONS TO WESTERN ATTENTION IN FRIENDLY MANNER. BUT AT SOME POINT THIS MAY NO LONGER BE POSSIBLE. OF COURSE, HE ADDED, IF ONE OF PARTIES DOESN'T FULFILL HIS OBLIGATIONS THE OTHER SIDE CAN ALWAYS CALL FOR CONSULATIONS.

13. ABRASIMOV ASKED THAT HIS VIEWS BE MADE KNOWN TO THE UK AND FRENCH GOVERNMENTS, AND ALSO THAT AMBASSADOR STOESSEL BE FULLY BRIEFED ON CONTENTS OF DISCUSSION.

14. TWO SIDES ALSO AGREED TO SHORT PRESS ANNOUNCEMENTS OF
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LUNCHEON TO BE RELEASED BY EACH EMBASSY. IT WAS ALSO AGREED

AS IN THE PAST THAT THE CONFIDENTIALITY OF
THE CONVERSATION WOULD BE HONORED.

15. COMMENT: ABRASIMOV HELD TO STANDARD SOVIET POSITIONS (SEE
USBERLIN 1939) DURING HIS CONVERSATION. WHILE SAYING
THAT THE SOVIET UNION NOW HAS NOTHING TO ADD TO THE QA, HE
SUGGESTED THAT IN THE EVENT OF WHAT IS REGARDED AS VIOLATIONS,
IT MIGHT CALL FOR THE CONSULTATIONS PROVIDED FOR IN PARA 4
OF THE FINAL QUADRIPARTITE PROTOCOL. THE ALLIES AND
ESPECIALLY THE UNITED STATES CAME IN FOR PRAISE WITH A
RATHER HEAVY DOSE OF CONDOMINIUM THEORY--THAT THE US
AND THE USSR TOGETHER CAN PRECENT PRBLEMS NOT ONLY IN BERLIN
BUT THROUGHOUT THE WORLD. ABRASIMOV RAISED IN PASSING
THE QUESTION OF BERLIN'S PARTICIPATION IN THE EUROPEAN
PARLIAMENT BUT DECIDED NOT TO PURSUE THE SUBJECT PROBABLY
BECAUSE OF TIME PRESSURE. HE MADE CLEAR THROUGHOUT THE
LUNCHEON AND CONVERSATIONS THE IMPORTANCE HE PERSONALLY
ATTACHES TO MAINTAINING CONTACT WITH HIS US COLLEAGUE AND
HE REMINISCED ABOUT HIS EARLIER FRIENDSHIPS WITH AMBASSADOR
MCGHEE AND AMBASSADOR RUSH WHOM HE "RESPECTED HIGHLY,"
WHILE REGRETTING THE DEPARTURE FROM EAST BERLIN OF AMBASSADOR
COOPER WHOSE FRIENDSHIP MEANT MUCH TO HIM. WE SUSPECT THAT
MORE THAN PERSONAL PROCLIVITIES ARE INVOLVED HERE AND THAT
ABRASIMOV IS UNDER INSTRUCTIONS TO MAINTAIN CLOSE CONTACT
WITH THE US AMBASSADORS IN THE FRG AND GDR.GEORGE

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 16 SEP 1999
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: REPORTS, SOCIAL RECEPTIONS, DIPLOMATIC DISCUSSIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 25 SEP 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: ElyME
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976USBERL02026
Document Source: ADS
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: n/a
Film Number: D760363-0280
From: USBERLIN
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t197609108/baaaerjm.tel
Line Count: 298
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, TEXT ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 6
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: ElyME
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 01 APR 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <01 APR 2004 by BoyleJA>; APPROVED <11 AUG 2004 by ElyME>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: AMBASSADOR HILLENBRAND'S SEPTEMBER 24 LUNCHEON WITH AMBASSADOR ABRASIMOV
TAGS: PFOR, WB, US, UK, UR, FR, GE, GC, (HILLENBRAND, MARTIN J), (ABRASIMOV)
To: PRIORITY
STATE INFO LONDON
MOSCOW
NATO
PARIS
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Type: TE

Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006